



## EDITORIAL

# The resistible rise of populism in Europe

---

Mikuláš Dzurinda

Published online: 19 December 2016

© The Author(s) 2016. This article is published with open access at Springerlink.com

Parliamentary elections across Europe have seen an increasing number of votes being cast in support of populist parties. These parties come from diverse ideological backgrounds but they are linked by their characterisation of politics as a fight between the good and the bad: the defenders of the oppressed citizens versus the supposedly corrupt elite. Making vast promises to their electorate, these parties challenge the central elements of democratic thinking and practice.

In Poland, Norway and Finland, right-wing populist parties are now members of the governing coalitions. This trend is disconcerting as it threatens the opportunities for established democratic parties to deliver solid policy outcomes. The history of Europe shows us that populist movements have traditionally fed on economic, social and political crises. The current refugee and eurozone crises, among others, are providing ample opportunity for populists to increase their influence. Populists are skilled in appealing to people's emotions through sensational narratives, myths and fears that plant the seeds of distrust in a constructed enemy. The simple solutions to complex problems offered by their charismatic leaders have attracted many voters.

---

M. Dzurinda (✉)

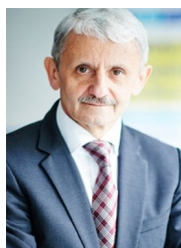
Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies, Rue du Commerce 20, 1000 Brussels, Belgium  
e-mail: [ev@martenscentre.eu](mailto:ev@martenscentre.eu)

However, it remains to be seen whether the current populist movements will succeed in meeting the electorates' expectations. As I was prime minister of Slovakia at a pivotal time for my country, I have experienced the value of open and in-depth communication and of finding solutions within the framework of liberal and representative democracy. Delivering sound and balanced policies is of utmost importance to ensuring that problems are properly addressed and growth continues in the future. What Europe needs is action. We need a structurally reformed Europe with real implementation. To remain strong and viable societies in the long term, we need to reform our social, educational and health care systems. There is no sense in pretending we are solving the problems that exist: we have to solve them. Populists are winning through their strong words. We, especially the Christian Democrats, can only win through strong actions.

This issue of the *European View* addresses the problem of populism in today's Europe. The interaction between populist parties and conventional parties is discussed, along with proposals for potential ways forward. Furthermore, the role and influence of political communication are in our focus, as are the refugee and economic crises, which can be identified as potential breeding grounds for populism. From this issue on, the *European View* has been reformed to include topics unrelated to the main theme, so as to enable discussion on more than one subject. Therefore, the reader will also find insightful contributions on the collaboration among the Visegrád Four, the relationship between political economy and misinformation, the use of words in the media regarding the refugee crisis and the tactics of diplomacy.

I hope that the work of our authors will provoke constructive ideas among our readers on how to work towards a party landscape free from populism. Achieving this is vital to Europe's future.

**Open Access** This article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License which permits any use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author(s) and the source are credited.



**Mikuláš Dzurinda** is president of the Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies.